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LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. CHARLES GRANT,

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF CONTROUL,

ON THE

PRESENT STATE OF

BRITISH INTERCOURSE WITH CHINA.

BY

31

CHARLES MARJORIBANKS, Esq. M.P.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE IN CHINA.



LONDON :

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LETTER, &c.

SIR,

THE Bill for the regulation of our future intercourse with China having now passed into a law, and, in common with every part of the great East India Question, having received from Parliament less consideration than its importance deserved, I am induced to draw your attention to a subject which involves the interests of what must become one of the largest and most valuable branches of British commerce. I abstain from entering into the details of the early history of our trade to China, which would exhibit few circumstances in any way creditable to our national character. Our first merchants who visited that country, whether servants of the East India Company or

interlopers, as the free traders were then termed, were only animated by a thirst for gain. Credit and principle were alike sacrificed for its attainment. The home government, during the reigns of the Princes of the Stuart family, was little under the influence of public honour; and transactions of its subjects at a distance, however criminal or to be deprecated, were viewed with unconcern. The representatives of the Company were persons of the most illiterate description. Receive, as an instance, the following extract of a letter from their agents in China to the Chairman of the Court of Directors in London, in the year 1660. Speaking of the necessity of submission to the exactions of the Chinese government, they state—

“ We feel assured that to lose a hog would be the vastest imprudence for a halfpenny worth of tar; and we will say this, that 'tis the part of sound policy to be as cunning as a serpent and harmless as a dove, and not to forget that we reckon that the Tartars and Chinese will stumble at a straw, provided in contradiction to their interests, and will jump over a mountain where they can catch the least advantage, though it be as high as the monument.”

The instructions given by the Court of Di-

rectors to their agents were often of the most discreditable kind. Sometimes, by way of adding dignity to their office in the estimation of the Chinese, they possessed the powers of king's consuls. Indeed, at one period, there were two king's consuls in China, the representatives of rival East India Companies. How little our national name or reputation was likely to be elevated in the opinion of the natives or their government, by such a state of things, may be readily concluded. We possessed also none of the advantages of the European nations which preceded us. Both the Portuguese and Spaniards came recommended to the supreme government of Peking by the Roman Catholic missionaries, who, during the sixteenth century, had obtained much influence with both the monarch and his court, an influence which was indiscriminately directed against Protestants. English transactions were also unhappily blended with those of the Dutch, whose whole history, connected with their colonial possessions in the East, is one of degrading avarice and cruelty. The treaties of James the First more strictly associated our policy with theirs, and numerous piracies were committed by them under the English flag on Chinese coasting vessels. This, as might naturally be concluded, when connected with the

then limited extent of our trade, brought the British name into merited contempt. In later periods the rapid and extraordinary aggrandizement of our Indian empire has exchanged this feeling of contempt for one of deep and distrustful apprehension, to mitigate and remove which ought to be the great end and object of the Board over which you preside. This will not be done by pursuing a system of wretched subserviency to a corrupt and despotic government; but by acting in strict accordance with those sound principles of national honour which we apply to our intercourse with most other nations, but which, for some ill-defined reason, we have never yet adopted for the regulation of our connexion, either political or commercial, with China.

I am well aware there are those who maintain, and who will endeavour to influence your mind upon this subject; that as we have for a long term of years been called dogs at Constantinople, we may as well continue to be called devils at Canton and Peking; but rest satisfied of one great and practical truth, confirmed by every page of the history of our intercourse with China, that acts of subserviency which have proved injurious to our national character, have invariably proved detrimental to our commercial interests. These are mutu-

ally and inseparably associated, they must stand or fall together.

It cannot be otherwise than well known to you, that all foreign commerce in China is restricted, by official proclamation, to one port in the southern province of the empire, and appointed to be exclusively transacted by one body of native dealers, called Hong merchants. This was very far from being formerly the case. In the earlier periods of our trade, all the different ports of the empire were open to our ships. Our merchants were permitted to transact business with any merchants of the country, and it was not till towards the end of the seventeenth century,* that the exclusive privileges of the Hong merchants were conceded to them. The fact is simply this, that foreigners have, for a long succession of years, pursued a system of tame submission to the despotism of China, which, like all other despotisms, trampling upon abject submission, has gone on multiplying its restrictions; and except for the counteracting resistance which it has hitherto met with from the influence of the East India Company, (an influence which has never been exerted to the extent it ought to have been,) we should, in all probability, have been expelled from the port of Canton, as we have been from the more northern ports, by

* A. D. 1680.

the arbitrary exactions and oppressions of the local government. It is a fact not generally adverted to, that the ships of the East India Company continued to trade with the other provinces of the empire besides Canton, long after they were prohibited by imperial proclamation—indeed till very late in the last century. The Company did not then consider this smuggling. I know no very good reason why they should call it so now. The truth is, that the edicts of the emperor fulminated from Peking, are often issued without any expectation, and sometimes without even any wish, that they should be obeyed. They are “mere sound and fury, signifying nothing,” mere harmless thunder; and in that celestial empire every subordinate agent of government, imitating his imperial master, “every petty, pelting officer, uses his heaven for thunder, nothing but thunder.”

As all foreign commerce is at present confined to the port of Canton by the existing imperial proclamation, so are all foreign traders directed to deal exclusively with the Hong merchants; but the corrupt connivance of the officers of the Chinese government renders this, like all other such *laws*, abortive. The Hong merchants are a class of individuals to whom a very inaccurate reputation has gene-

rally been attached. Their extreme liberality and generosity have often been most unjustly extolled. They have been held forth as a pattern to merchants in other countries, and credit often bestowed upon them, of which they were in no wise deserving. Take, for instance, the payment by them of debts due to foreigners by bankrupt members of their own body, or remuneration made by them for losses sustained by fire or robbery. For such acts they have been highly commended; but how were they effected? The Hong merchants may in some respects be regarded as an associated corporation. They meet in council for the discussion of all matters connected with their common interests. On such occasions, the payments alluded to above, as well as all indirect taxations imposed upon them by their own government, are taken into consideration, when they agree to levy a corresponding per centage on foreign commerce. One or two per cent., for instance, upon raw cotton, and each Hong merchant is required to contribute, according to the extent of his dealings in this article, the stipulated per centage to the council fund. The foreign importer receives in consequence a price for his cotton less the per centage, and thus remunerates himself for his losses! It is painful to witness some otherwise intelligent

men, in evidence before parliamentary committees, giving to Hong merchants and their government the highest praise for liberality on such occasions, where they are only guilty of fraud and deception. There are some instances, in former years, of acts of individual generosity on the part of Hong merchants; but this was at a period when their profits were enormous. They are often scrupulously accurate in their commercial dealings; but this appears to have been communicated to them by the great liberality and justice in all transactions of the East India Company, which has given to them a character which naturally does not belong to them: at least, we observe it in no other native institutions. The Chinese merchants are keen and cunning, and rarely, except when prompted by self-interest, just; and they are, perhaps, the most accomplished liars in the world.

It has often been asserted, that the mercantile character is despised in China. It is certainly considered, or affected to be considered, of a secondary grade; but so it is in most other countries, and the contempt for it is more assumed than real. The Hong merchants, it must be admitted, are generally men of inferior rank in life; and more particularly of late years, when the oppressive exactions of the

officers of the Canton government have rendered their situations such as men of credit or opulence are not desirous of. It may illustrate this point to mention the materials of which the Hong was composed during this last lease of the Company's charter. In 1813, their body consisted of eleven persons.

Howqua, with his elder brother Puiqua, were in early life menial servants. Howqua was amongst the solitary instances of a Hong merchant who possessed any knowledge beyond the sphere of his own immediate transactions. He embarked, at one time, largely in trade in American ships, and was for many years most successful. By his keenness and sagacity he acquired great wealth, of the greater part of which he has been deprived by the oppressive, illegal exactions of the officers of government.

Mowqua, the founder of the Hong in early life, sold oranges in the streets of Canton. The Hong is now bankrupt.

Puankhequa—The first of that name was an itinerant merchant trading with Manilla. The elder member of the family, on being recently required to undertake the management of the firm, declared he would

rather be a dog than a Hong merchant.

Chunqua formerly held an official situation in the province of Pe-che-lee, where he was found guilty of speculation. He was thought good enough for a Hong merchant, and lately became bankrupt, after having defrauded his creditors to a very considerable extent.

Conseequa was a person of respectable family and very amiable character. Unhappily he associated himself in trade with American merchants, from whom he received the most ungrateful return—their debts owing to him being upwards of half a million sterling. He was also most nefariously imposed upon by an Englishman, who came to China with a diploma as Austrian consul, in a frigate sent to China by that government. Conseequa was recommended to apply to the Court of Vienna for redress. He received in reply a snuff-box, with the Emperor of Austria's picture upon it, and a complimentary letter from Prince Metternich. The snuff-box he was afraid to exhibit, for fear of his being discovered by his jealous government in correspondence with a "foreign devil barbarian king." When showing the

letter, he used to say it was full of very handsome words, but that it was very extraordinary it made no mention of his dollars. After being thus plundered of his property by these republican and high-monarchical swindlers, he died in misery and a bankrupt.

Kinqua was a tide-waiter. He continues a merchant, though in an insolvent state.

Poonequa and Exchin were shopkeepers—both the Hongs are now bankrupt.

Manhop was a coolie, or common porter. His Hong is now bankrupt.

Goqua was a tide-waiter.

Fatqua was a shopkeeper.

Of these eleven persons who composed the Hong twenty years ago, six have become bankrupt, while the remaining five are nearly all in a state of questionable solvency. During this period other Hong merchants have been created, some of whom have failed, but only one or two remain of any credit or character. No man of opulence will now accept the situation. A more wretched instrument for the conduct of a great trade than a body composed of the materials above mentioned can scarcely be imagined. It is well adapted, however, for the purposes of a corrupt despotism, as it affords a

much readier means of arbitrary impost than were the privilege of trading possessed by the general community. I regret to have to state it as my opinion, that the existence of the monopoly of the East India Company has assisted in preserving that of the Hong merchants, which must otherwise have fallen to pieces from its own insufficiency.

The members of this corporate body are declared by the Chinese government responsible for all acts of foreigners at Canton, however little those acts may be within the sphere of their control. They are pronounced to be the only proper medium of communication with the government. It becomes, therefore, the unremitting endeavour of the Hong merchants to keep foreigners within the severest restrictions, and to prevent any enlargement of their privileges which may infringe on the rights of their own monopoly. Although, therefore, their existence depends upon foreign trade, they are the greatest enemies to its improvement or extension. They resort to the lowest means of fraud and deception to impose upon foreigners, and do not hesitate at the assertion of the grossest falsehoods in representing their conduct to the government. Such is a part of the system to which British merchants are compelled to submit in China.

Under so corrupt an administration as that of the local officers of government at Canton, as might be expected, numerous evasions of what is called *the law* take place. It may be broadly and safely asserted, that for the last ten years no foreign merchants except the East India Company have traded in conformity to Chinese proclamations. This state of things can scarcely be called smuggling, as the officers of government are the persons under whose connivance, and frequently by whose immediate agency, these illicit transactions are carried on. There is not a British, American, or other individual foreign merchant in Canton, however respectable, who does not pay bribes to the officers of customs for the evasion of the government duties. This at once accounts for the circumstance at which surprise has been expressed in this country, that the Company, who have sold British manufactures at a higher price than individuals, have declared that they sustained a loss, while the private merchant obtained a profit. This, however much it may be at variance with strict principle, may certainly be employed as an argument against the existence of the exclusive privileges of the Company. We are not called upon to maintain Chinese fiscal regulations. We must take China as we find it. Nor must we too hastily

condemn the conduct, in such transactions, of its subordinate official authorities. Most of the offices of government are put up to sale, and sold to the highest bidder. The salaries are very inadequate, and the possessor of the office naturally looks to remunerate himself by corrupt practices for the sums by which he purchased his appointment. It may safely be asserted, that there is no officer of the Canton government whose hands are clean, or who is not at all times ready to infringe the law which it is his nominal duty to uphold. Is it possible, let me ask, to apply the principles which regulate our international intercourse with the nations of civilized Europe, to a government constituted as this is? Yet we see it constantly attempted, and by sensible men too, both in and out of parliament.

The East India Company have always professed to act in strict accordance with the *laws of China*, and I regret to see the objections urged much more strongly than they ought to have been by them, to attempts which have been recently made, contrary to Chinese proclamations, to extend our commerce to the northern ports of the empire. The Company seem to forget that they themselves continued to trade with those ports long after they were prohibited by the edicts of the emperor.

They have frequently at Canton dealt with merchants not members of the Hong. During the last war, contrary to strict prohibition, their ships were manned with Chinese sailors, who were all smuggled on board. Chinese settlers were conveyed in them to islands in the eastern Archipelago, and to St. Helena, a very high infraction of the laws of the empire. Of later years silver bullion has been brought to London in their ships, in defiance of a thousand proclamations. I do not state these transgressions for the purpose of condemning them, but the East India Company have often refined too much upon these points, and taken to themselves more credit than they deserved.

The very great inadequacy of the Hong merchants to conduct the different branches of foreign commerce, has induced numerous native dealers, with the connivance, of course, of the government, to engage in it. These are generally known by the name of *outside merchants*. Individual foreigners deal largely with them, and their goods are often shipped off through the warehouses, and in the name of the Hong merchants. Several of them are men of good credit and character, and they will engage to place cargoes in ships either in the port of Whampoa, at Lintin, or at Macao, as may be required. It will be one of the immediate

effects of an open trade, to increase the numbers of these merchants ; and as they acquire numerical strength, the officers of their own government will be less able to oppress them, and foreign commerce will be thus less severely taxed. The total want of power of the Chinese local authorities, even if they had the disposition, to suppress this class of persons, is best exhibited in the present state of foreign trade, as it is now conducted at Lintin. It has become of vast magnitude, and is carried on under circumstances more peculiar and anomalous than probably any other traffic at present in the world.

The very great difficulties attending the importation of opium into China, gave rise to the trade at Lintin. You are well aware of the extent to which this deleterious drug is now introduced into that country. To any friend to humanity it is a painful subject of contemplation, that we should continue to pour this black and envenomed poison into the sources of human happiness and well-being. The misery and demoralization which it creates are almost beyond belief ; but we console ourselves with the reflection, that if we did not poison the Chinese at this round rate, somebody else would, and the trade proceeds with no other consideration from all parties engaged in it,

than how much profit may be made by it. The annual importation of opium into China within the period of the Company's charter, now expired, has increased from three and four thousand chests to twenty, the value of which may be taken at nearly the same amount in millions of dollars. It comprises nearly five-sevenths of the whole of private British trade at Canton.

In former years, the opium trade was entirely centred in Macao, where the facilities to a smuggled commodity afforded by the warehouses of the Portuguese merchants were very great. Here it would probably have continued to remain, had not a short-sighted policy on the part of the insignificant government of that place, induced it to attempt to secure the profits of the trade exclusively to Portuguese subjects, by prohibiting other foreigners from engaging in it. As the greater part of the opium was the property of British merchants, it naturally sought some other vent, and was sent on board of country ships to Whampoa, and smuggled in Chinese boats in small quantities at a time. Threats and indeed attempts on the part of the Canton government to search the ships, rendered this mode of proceeding insecure; and the trade, about the year 1821, was forced to seek, and eventually to find, a refuge amongst the numerous islands in the

mouth of the Canton river. The most common place of resort was Lintin, where a most extensive illicit trade is now regularly established.

You are also doubtless well aware that the importation of opium is most violently denounced by the edicts of the emperor and all subordinate officers of government, many of whom are the persons by whose connivance, and sometimes by whose immediate instrumentality, the trade is carried on. Here we have China and its rulers exhibited in all their weakness, presumption, and corruption, professing strict maxims of virtue, which become the more strongly contrasted with their gross immorality, affecting high political principle which they do not feel, and thundering forth proclamations which they never expect or wish to see obeyed. The vice of opium-smoking is principally practised by persons in the higher ranks of life. The palace of the viceroy of Canton was recently burned down by his secretary having retired to rest with his opium-pipe, and so set fire to his apartment. The emperor's eldest son, the heir expectant of the empire, lately died from excessive indulgence in its use. Almost all persons of wealth are addicted to it, while Chinese political and moral philosophy is satisfied by anathematizing it as a fiendish invention of the foreigner. It

may readily be concluded that this trade assists in lowering the estimation of the foreign character in the minds of all intelligent Chinese.

The monopoly of the Company in opium ought, from motives of humanity alone, to be considered by you in a very different light from that of salt, both of which it is now the endeavour of the free trader to remove. While the latter is among the most essential necessities of life, the other can only be regarded, except the small quantities required for the purposes of medicine, as a pernicious poison. Its production in India has, within the last twenty years, increased nearly fivefold, and by no means a proportional increased amount of capital is applied in China to its purchase. The price has continued gradually to decline with the increased extent of importation; so much so, that it was actually in contemplation at one time to have destroyed a portion of the Patna and Benares opium to uphold the monopoly price. It is perhaps one of the only instances where Dutch colonial policy of destroying a part of the exuberant productions of the earth would be commendable. The quantity brought from Smyrna to Canton does not seem to increase; and while you have no competitors, it is most desirable to limit the quantity produced in India as much as possible. Any man who

has witnessed its frightful ravages and demoralizing effect in China, must feel deeply upon this subject.

From twenty to forty ships now regularly rendezvous at Lintin, and the adjacent islands, where an illicit trade is carried on, not only in opium, but in goods of every description. The imbecile government of China has no power to put it down. The Chinese admiral on the station sails among the islands about once a month, fires a few blank guns, and promulgates not a few loud and violent proclamations, and, returning to Canton, reports to the viceroy that he has swept the seas of all foreign ships. The vessels of his squadron frequently engage in the opium trade. A system so perfectly and thoroughly contemptible cannot well be imagined, nor one more calculated to expose the government to the derision of its own subjects. The Chinese opium-boats are of excellent construction, and admirably managed. Their crews are much more efficient than those of the government vessels, and they are frequently manned by persons of desperate character. It happens occasionally that they are caught off their guard, and opium seized. A large fire is on such occasions lighted by the seizing officers on a neighbouring eminence, for the avowed purpose of burning the poison. It is scarcely

necessary to add that no portion of it is destroyed.

You have no doubt seen a report lately made by a viceroy more honest than usual, to the emperor, declaring his total inability to suppress the opium trade, and recommending that it should be legalized. Here is a strong demonstration of the powerlessness of the government of China. What will be the ultimate result of this recommendation is at present doubtful; but it is a proof that a similar trade to that carried on at Lintin must, and will, continue to extend itself in the Canton river, and gradually, I am induced to believe, to other ports of the empire. Ships under such circumstances trade under numerous advantages. They pay no port duties whatever; procure provisions on the readiest terms; and are free from all oppressions of the officers of government. It would originate a very difficult question, were any persons connected with them to be seized and put to death. For such, and other peculiar contingencies, it will be necessary that the British consulate to be sent to Canton should be fully prepared. Conflicts have already taken place between the Lintin ships and Chinese vessels, where natives have been killed. The viceroy, though he continued to send threatening letters to the select

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committee, seemed embarrassed how to deal with the question. It is one of the melancholy parts of our situation in China, that foreigners who act in obedience to what are called its laws, are oppressed and affected to be despised, while those who act in defiance of them are treated with consideration and respect. The trade at Lintin is now greatly more extensive in amount value, than that carried on at Whampoa; and I know no reason whatever why a similar trade should not be carried on with other ports of the empire. It might involve a very delicate question as one of international convention, but the Chinese government proudly and haughtily disdains entering into any treaties with you whatever.—It must take the consequences.

With a view to the very peculiar nature of our relations with China, and to ascertain, if possible, the disposition of the people and government to a more extended intercourse—previously to my departure from Canton in 1832, I sent a vessel to visit the principal northern ports, and, if time permitted, to proceed to Corea, Japan, and the Loochoo Islands. Mr. Lindsay, a most intelligent and enterprising member of the Factory, well acquainted with the Chinese language and character, was sent in charge of the expedition, and has very ably ful-

filled the delicate trust reposed in him. He was accompanied by Mr. Gutzlaff, a German Protestant missionary, who had made several voyages in Chinese junks, had penetrated into China, and resided there for some months. He is besides a man of very bold and daring character, and admirably conversant with the different dialects of the empire. I regret that this voyage was disapproved of by the Court of Directors, but I cannot help thinking that much useful information has been derived from it. Mr. Lindsay was almost every where received with great kindness and hospitality by the natives, but with much distrustful jealousy by the officers of government. The important facts have been ascertained that the people are every where most desirous of trade with the English, and that they are jealous of its being possessed so exclusively by the natives of Canton. The government officers in most instances seem equally anxious for the establishment of commercial intercourse, which would greatly increase their emoluments, but are only apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of the emperor were they to countenance it. Besides they entertain, in common with all classes of Chinese, great alarm of the ambitious views of England. It is above all things desirable to remove this impression. Much may be done

by means of the press. In proof of this, I may mention that I drew up a brief sketch of the British character and policy—simply stating that our empire was already too large, that we were far from being desirous of territorial acquisition, but that our only object in visiting China was to carry on an amicable commercial intercourse, &c. Mr. Lindsay took with him several hundred copies of this tract. It was received and read with great avidity by the Chinese. It has been publicly commented upon by the emperor, who expresses surprise that a foreigner could write in the language of China, approves of the principles laid down in it; but, as might have been expected, adds that all foreign trade must, as heretofore, be confined to the port of Canton. Several ships have since this expedition proceeded to the northern ports, I regret to say principally for the purpose of disposing of opium. They have generally succeeded. They were of course ordered away by official proclamations, which will continue to be issued till they become a dead letter, and the trade is regularly established. You must expect, however, before long to hear of collision with the natives, or seizures of British subjects, and be prepared to deal with them accordingly.

It has frequently been most inaccurately as-

serted that foreign trade is carried on at Canton with numerous facilities and advantages. There is no great commerce in the world subject, I believe, to so many multiplied restrictions. It is limited to one port in the most southern province, which neither consumes our principal articles of import, nor produces the great article of export. Our woollens are principally adapted to be used in the more northern provinces, in their transit to which they are subjected to every variety of arbitrary impost. A piece of cloth, which was vended in Canton for eight dollars, has been known to sell in a contiguous province for twenty-two. The principal tea provinces—for tea is more or less grown in every part of the empire—are Fokien, Kiangnan, and Chekiang, all maritime provinces, and Kiangsi. The tea is not even permitted to be brought coastwise to Canton in native vessels, but is conveyed through the interior, partly by tedious and difficult river and canal navigation, partly by laborious land carriage, and is, in one instance, transported by manual labour, over a very high range of mountains. Frequent transshipments are rendered necessary, and it is subject to these inconveniences for the sole purpose of securing numerous and exorbitant transit duties. There is, perhaps, no produce of the earth which is exposed to such a variety of

taxation as a tea-leaf. It yields a profit in the first instance to the small farmer by whom it is cultivated, and a second to the tea merchant by whom it is manufactured. It is taxed directly and indirectly five or six times in its progress to Canton, where, on its arrival, besides yielding large profits to the Hong merchants, and paying the imperial duties, it is subject to the impositions of the officers of the local government; it pays an expensive freight to England, and after yielding liberal profits to the Company, it falls into the merciless hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, by whom it is charged an *ad valorem* duty of a hundred per cent. It is needless to point out what prodigious advantages would arise from our ships proceeding as formerly to the ports in the tea provinces, or what an extended consumption there would be of our manufactures by an intercourse with the more northern portion of the Chinese empire. I am disposed to regard it as presenting the widest field for commercial enterprize, which remains untrodden in the world.

With respect to the facilities said to be afforded to foreign trade at Canton, there can be no doubt that purchases and sales are made and ships discharged and loaded with much expedition. This arises from the very great intel-

ligence, industry, and dexterity of the Chinese, and the small space within which business is transacted. But as far as the government is concerned, the system is one in every respect of cruel and grinding oppression towards all natives connected with the trade, and their ruin and impoverishment is constantly the result. The very boats which convey cargo to ships, though the same are employed in discharging them, are not permitted to bring back goods without returning to Canton for a fresh licence. This arrangement is solely for the purpose of securing double fees to the mandarins. For the same object they are not allowed to be loaded nearly to the extent of their capacity, yet we hear of facilities and advantages at Canton, greater than exist at the ports of London or Liverpool! The port charges and harbour duties on foreign ships at Canton are also extremely heavy.

It is quite a vulgar error to believe that the Chinese are otherwise than a very commercial nation. They are, without exception, the most trafficking people in Asia. They continue the great traders of the East, in defiance of the strictest imperial prohibitions—another instance of the total inefficacy of *Chinese laws*. Previously to the arrival of Europeans in the empire, they had established commercial relations with

all the surrounding nations—with Corea, Japan, the Loochoo Islands, Cochin China, Cambodia, and Siam, and with a view to the extension of trade, had even sent ambassadors to Hindostan, Persia, and Arabia. But when the ambition of the European character began to develop itself; when the Portuguese had, twenty years after the great voyage of Vasco da Gama, established themselves nearly in every important position in Asia, and the Spaniards had seized and colonized the Philippine Islands so contiguous to the coasts of the empire; when the still more rapacious conquests of the valuable Spice Islands of the Eastern Archipelago had been made by the Dutch, and factories been formed by them in Formosa, and other places adjacent to China, the jealousy of the Chinese government became powerfully awakened. Every year which has elapsed, from the first establishment of British power in India to the present, has tended greatly to aggravate its jealous apprehension, and to confirm it in that exclusive policy which it has deemed it wise and prudent to adopt.

The first impressions of the European character derived by the Chinese, were from the Roman Catholic missionaries, whose talents and enthusiasm, particularly of the Jesuits, enabled them to ingratiate themselves with the

Emperor and his government. To such an extent, indeed, had these eminent men employed their intrigue and influence, that they were admitted not only to public but to private interviews with the emperor. European sciences were taught by them, and maps of the empire constructed under their direction. But they, perhaps, raised themselves more in Chinese estimation by the instruction of the natives in the improved manufacture of gunpowder and casting of large pieces of ordnance, than by enlightening them in the more useful branches of knowledge. They succeeded in making numerous converts to Christianity, and would have continued to do so, had they not been interfered with by the Dominicans, a set of infuriated bigots. The contentions between the opposite parties became so violent, that the Chinese government, with much reason, were disgusted with their proceedings, and intimated to them, that considering their religion inculcated peace upon earth, and good will towards all men, their conduct was the most unintelligible commentary upon their own creed. They were, in consequence, ordered to depart from the empire, and from that period their importance and influence in China has continued to decline, and their tenets to be degraded and de-

spised. There are no missionaries now left in Peking.

The first European traders who resorted to China were often persons of the most desperate and abandoned character, who committed, and generally with impunity, acts of the most violent description. The first impressions, therefore, received by the Chinese of the European character, were from a set of intriguing priests and unprincipled and marauding merchants; and the barbarous and inhuman massacres of the Chinese colonists at Manilla by the Spaniards, and at Batavia by the Dutch, it may readily be believed, tended greatly to degrade foreigners in public opinion in China. Though England has happily no such enormities to answer for, yet neither the policy nor attitude which she has hitherto assumed in China have been such as to render her adequately respected, while her conquests have excited no other feelings than jealousy and fear. But let us not deny to the government of China the credit which belongs to it of having effectually triumphed over European power and dignity. The ruler of that most ancient empire, if we have recourse to Chinese authority, the first and early chosen of heaven, the most favoured among the nations of the earth, has seen the representatives of the monarchs of European

kingdoms bear tribute to his throne, and grovel in the dust submissively before him—has listened with the pride natural to man to the acknowledgment of his vain superiority, while he has treated their abject and submissive spirit with the contempt and indifference it deserved.

Before offering any opinion as to how our present relations with China may be best improved, it may be desirable briefly to allude to the attempts which have been hitherto made for this purpose, which have been in general lamentable failures, or at best very partially successful. In the numerous discussions in which the British Factory have been involved with the Chinese government, which have all been forced upon them by the intolerable oppressions of the Canton authorities, the English representatives have had the greatest difficulties to contend with. With very ill-defined instructions for their guidance, they have been left to the exercise of their own discretion and judgment, and always subject to having their conduct approved or disapproved of according to the event, which was often not within their control. Few men have had a more difficult or delicate duty to perform, or have discharged it with more conscientious accuracy. But the engagements which have been entered into with them by the Chinese government, have

proved of mere temporary advantage, as they are entirely disregarded when it suits the caprice or interest of any succeeding viceroy to do so. What might, in many respects, be considered a treaty, was concluded between the Factory and the Canton government in 1814 ; but in less than a year and a half every article of it was violated. The privileges and concessions, therefore, obtained at different times by the struggles of the select committee, have never been permanent, and may at any time be subverted. We have continued at Canton sometimes in a worse condition—sometimes in a better—very much dependent on the individual character of the viceroy. The respect in which our national character is held has certainly been advanced, but by no means in proportion to the advancing civilization of this country, or the greatly increased magnitude of our commerce.

Our two state embassies to China accomplished little, except in increasing our knowledge of the very peculiar character of its people and government, and making a more favourable impression of our own. The Chinese do not recognise an ambassador in the character which we attach to him. They regard him as a mere bearer of presents—a *tribute bearer*, as they term him, from an inferior prince to their

supreme emperor—an official dignitary personating his sovereign in the capacity of a negotiator, is a personage whom they do not condescend to recognize. In all interviews with a foreign ambassador, they ask him how old he is, or how old his king is; how many children, and sometimes how many wives he has; and they generally express extreme surprise at the moderation of European ambassadors, when they are told they have only one. The conversation is almost always of a trifling, or at least of a general character. If business be alluded to, they start as if a secret snare were discovered, and are silent. Besides, the officers of the Chinese government must always possess one peculiar advantage over us in the science of political intrigue, as they do not hesitate to assert the most positive falsehoods with the view of accomplishing their object; and with these the more venial equivocations of European policy are but little able to contend.* To have ingenuity sufficient to array

* When Lord Amherst expressed his determination to abide by the precedent of Lord Macartney, in not performing the Tartar prostration, a message came from the emperor, saying that it was a mistake—that he himself had seen the former English ambassador perform it. Here was an instance of the irresistible nature of the imperial thunder; as it was impossible, at least with safety, to tell the emperor that he lied.

falsehood in the garb of truth, and under the fair and outward form of cordiality to conceal the hidden and deep design, and on no occasion to be discountenanced or dismayed at the detection of his treachery, are parts of the character of a Chinese negotiator, to which it would be idle to expect successfully to oppose any of our refinements of diplomacy.

A man of more varied experience in the practice of courts and the characters of different nations, than Lord Macartney, was probably never selected to fill a public situation. After having visited and resided at most of the other courts of Europe, he was British ambassador at St. Petersburg. He was subsequently governor in the West Indies, and governor of Madras, (his government of the Cape of Good Hope was posterior to his China mission,) and was appointed governor-general of India, though he never discharged the duties of that high office. With all this accumulation of experience, in addition to talents of a superior order, no decided results can be said to have been attained by his embassy to Pekin ; at least, none of his requisitions of the imperial ministers were assented to. The estimate which he formed of the character of the Chinese government, its presumption, corruption, and imbecility, is well worthy your deliberate attention, or that of any Eng-

lish statesman, whose consideration is directed to the improvement of our intercourse with that empire.

Of Lord Amherst's embassy much more was expected, and by it, perhaps, still less was accomplished. That nobleman had the advantage of the assistance of men of the first local experience and intimate knowledge of the Chinese language and character; but, most unhappily, the precedent of Lord Macartney's embassy had been too little studied by the English ministry, from whom he received his instructions, which were contradictory on the very point on which, above all others, it ought to have been known the reception or rejection of the embassy would depend. Those who have the least attended to the subject, must be well aware that the haughty arrogance of the Chinese court demands from foreign ambassadors compliances of the most humiliating kind, and such as the representative of no independent state can with consistency submit to. As this is a subject on which much difference of opinion exists, but is one of those perhaps, above all others, which involves the question of how far we ought to be regulated by *strict principle* in our intercourse with the Chinese government, let me entreat for it your peculiar consideration. I speak more particu-

larly in reference to what, in the Chinese language, is called the *Ko-thow*—what has been termed by Europeans the Tartar *ceremony*, or Tartar *prostration* before the Emperor, or a piece of yellow silk representing his ideal presence. It consists in kneeling six successive times, and beating the forehead nine times against the ground at each successive kneeling. Chinese forms rise in gradation from those of mere common-place ceremony, to such as are appropriated for the worship of the Deity. The *Ko-thow* is the highest of these, having the greatest number of multiplied obeisances, and is reserved for heaven and the emperor. It is, therefore, decidedly an act of worship. How far the representative of a Christian monarch can with propriety acquiesce, may, at least, admit of a question. One of the best of our English historians, in speaking of the deification of the Roman emperors, has well observed, “The most lofty titles and the most abject postures which religion requires should be reserved for the Supreme Being, have been prostituted by flattery and fear to creatures of the same natures with ourselves.” The Chinese imperial robes are considered as remarkable for their exclusive splendour, as was the Roman purple, while the being they adorn with as high pretensions to divinity, is generally as remarkable for his contempt of all the moral

attributes of man. How far it is desirable that British ambassadors should worship him, I leave to your well-regulated mind to determine.

The Tartar prostration is also exacted from all foreign ambassadors, as an act of vassalage and acknowledgment of the tributary dependence of the prince whom they represent, and the supremacy of the Emperor of China. It cannot, therefore, be acquiesced in without this degrading admission being made. Could the minister of any foreign sovereign, with any consistency, require to negotiate with any Chinese minister upon terms of equality, after having consented to such humiliation? As a question of principle, then, there is little doubt that this Tartar prostration could not be performed by an English ambassador without its sacrifice. Such was Lord Macartney's opinion repeatedly declared and acted upon, and such I have invariably found to be that of men possessed of a knowledge founded on experience of the Chinese character. But I will even admit that principle is, upon this occasion, to be abandoned altogether as a vulgar prejudice, and that it is to be consigned over to the theories of moral philosophy, and no longer adopted as the guide of human conduct; and that our king's representative is to have no other object but the acquisition of commercial privi-

leges and immunities, and ready to make any sacrifice to obtain them. Does any part of the history of foreign intercourse with China, lead us to expect that our end would be accomplished by subserviency to its government? The Dutch embassy, which immediately followed that of Lord Macartney, may be received as a most appropriate illustration. Mr. Van Braam, by whom it was conducted, determined to proceed, as he conceived, on much more enlarged views than the English, and acquiesced in all the court *ceremonies*, as of course they were termed by him. Bad as the fate of its predecessors had been, that embassy was treated with more insult and contempt than any that ever visited China. After being compelled to prostrate themselves before the emperor, they were, after a few days' close imprisonment at Peking, dismissed without being suffered to enter into any negotiation whatever. Some forty or fifty different times, on their progress through the empire, they were required to worship pieces of yellow cloth, emblems of the ideal presence of the emperor; and were sometimes roused from their heavy slumbers during the midnight hours—an inconvenience of no small moment to a Batavian subject, to the performance of this unprofitable duty. These devotional exercises Mr. Van Braam very coolly terms, in his

account of his mission, "performing the salute of honour!" Here, then, is one instance among many thousands, where submission to Chinese exactions only incurred multiplied degradation.

We know, moreover, from Chinese documents, which subsequently came into our possession, that somewhat similar treatment, had he submitted to the requisitions of the Chinese court, awaited Lord Amherst. We have all the imperial proclamations issued to regulate his reception and entertainment. It would be tedious and mortifying to detail them; but they recount a variety of degrading humiliations to which, it is much to be wished, no British ambassador may again be in a situation to be required to submit. Viewing the question of submission to the *Ko-thow* as one of principle, no doubt can remain upon the subject; and regarding it as one of expediency, I most sincerely believe it is incurring degradation without the remotest shadow of an equivalent. It is a wretched truckling to despotism, such as must bring merited punishment and disgrace on any foreign ambassador who is base enough to comply with it.

It is painful to reflect, that in the case of Lord Amherst's embassy, this was considered an open question. In his first instructions from the Secretary of State, he was directed to abide

by the precedent of Lord Macartney. In subsequent instructions, he was told he might deviate from that precedent, if any of the important objects of the embassy were likely to be obtained by his doing so. I question extremely whether any British minister would have dared in instructing any of our representatives at the courts of Europe, after having admitted an act to be one of positive degradation, to have sanctioned its performance under the plea that there was a prospect of profiting by it. But these instructions had reference to China, and it was said, "it is some sixteen thousand miles off—it is a semi-barbarous country—these are mere idle ceremonies, unworthy of being contested with an uncivilised people." This is, however, gross self-deception. We knock our heads, because we expect to get something by it; not because we think the Chinese semi-barbarous. We proceed solely on the shopkeeping principle. It is, however, fortunate for our national credit, that the question of interest, of mere profit and loss, demands from us that we should not thus degrade ourselves, but assume a higher attitude than we have yet done in our intercourse with the Chinese empire.

The principal scenes of the last embassy are too instructive to pass unnoticed. Lord Amherst had arrived at *Tong-chew*, within twelve

miles of Pekin; the question of the *Ko-thow* still unhappily being considered an open one. Sir George Staunton had distinctly protested in writing against its performance; and the minds of all the commissioners were made up on the impropriety of worshipping pieces of yellow silk. A body of Tartar mandarins, at the head of whom was a very important personage, who was styled *Duke Ho*, one of the emperor's numerous brothers-in-law, arrived, and, in the most vapouring and insulting manner, treated Lord Amherst at an interview with marked indignity, and commanded him at once to submit. Threats were made that Sir George Staunton should be seized as a traitor, and the commissioners were even reminded of the dangerous predicament in which the King of England might be placed were he to incur the displeasure of the Emperor of China. When it was discovered that the magnitude of this threat was not sufficiently appreciated, and that the minds of the English commissioners were incapable of being influenced by any attempts at intimidation, the conduct of this courtly duke underwent a most rapid revolution. He assumed the most conciliatory manners, adopted the most plausible arguments, and having failed in threats and insult, he tried promises. "Comply,"

said he, at an interview with Lord Amherst, "with the Tartar ceremony, and I will be your friend at Pekin." In consequence principally of this promise, which at most courts would have been considered of little value, and at the court of Pekin was of none, employed after attempted intimidation had failed, Lord Amherst, strongly urged by Mr. Ellis, the third commissioner, I lament to state, communicated to Sir George Staunton, that he had made up his mind to perform the *Ko-thow*, unless he were prepared to say that his doing so would be injurious to the interests of the East Indian Company.

I ever shall have a strong impression on my mind that the Chinese, who have much tact and discernment, observed the wavering upon this occasion, and that Lord Amherst had retreated from the vantage ground which he had previously occupied. He had even, in conversation with the mandarins, sounded them as to how far any of the objects of the embassy would be gained by his compliance. They perceived that he was ready to enter on the *barter* system, and to abandon the ground of principle. He further told them, at the same interview, that they should receive a final answer in the morning. This, after the question had been previously treated by the ambassador

as one which he would never entertain, indeed which he had declared that he had his own sovereign's express commands not to comply with, was very naturally considered by the mandarins as exhibiting a total change in his views. Had they known the precise state of the case, their exultation would doubtless have been greater. As it was, there is every probability a courier was dispatched to the imperial palace, to say that the English ambassador had been reduced to a state of becoming obedience. In the mean time Sir George Staunton reconsidered the important subject, and after strengthening his own opinion by those of the members of the factory who had accompanied him from Canton, which were unanimous, he informed Lord Amherst that his firm belief was that compliance would be injurious. As the ambassador had been required by his instructions to defer to the local experience of Mr. Elphinstone and Sir George Staunton, he declared his intention not to comply with the Tartar prostration. Attempts were made to intimate this resolution to the mandarins, but seem altogether to have been disregarded by them, and there is some difficulty in accounting for the headlong course of their subsequent proceedings. They were most desirous of avoiding all further interviews, and made im-

mediate preparations for the progress of the embassy to Peking.

After being fed in a stable-yard out of buckets usually employed in giving food to animals, the ambassador and commissioners in an English carriage, which was painfully ill adapted to the nature of the roads, the rest of the members of the embassy, some in carts, others on horseback, set out on this memorable expedition to the hotel, which was said to be prepared for their reception. After travelling all night along roads nearly impassable, at much risk and inconvenience, the ambassador, with the commissioners, detached from the greater part of his suite, arrived at daylight in the morning at a very large building, where, to their extreme astonishment, they were ushered into a court, and surrounded on all sides by Chinese and Tartar mandarins in their full dresses of ceremony. The ambassador was then informed that he was in the imperial palace, and that the emperor was on his throne and ready to receive him. Persons who have travelled all night in a mail coach may have some conception of the unhappy condition of the commissioners of embassy upon this extraordinary occasion. Lord Amherst expressed much surprise and indignation at the treatment which he had experienced, and added, the im-

possibility of his appearing before the emperor in the state in which he then was. The emperor was said to be a being of such enlarged mind, as would overlook any trifling imperfections of dress, &c.; and Duke Ho, in his urgency, went so far as to lay his hand upon the collar of his lordship's coat, with a view of pulling him towards the hall of audience. So decided was this demonstration, that Lord Amherst's aid-de-camp partly drew his sword. The ambassador immediately desired him to forbear, and with much firmness and dignity repelled the offered insult, declaring that nothing but irresistible violence would induce him to appear as he then was in the imperial presence. He further added, that he felt unwell and much fatigued, and begged he might be conducted to the hotel prepared for his reception.

When these circumstances were communicated to the emperor, orders were given for the removal of the ambassador and commissioners; and on this occasion was exhibited a characteristic instance of the strange incongruities of the court of Peking, of the blended mixture of the polished and effeminate Chinese with the rude ferocity of the Tartar character. Duke Ho, of whose *friendly* disposition the predicament in which he had placed the ambassador

may be received as ample testimony, enraged at the failure of his project for shuffling over the public interview, and degrading the English embassy as much as possible, seized a whip from one of his attendants. He walked before Lord Amherst, to escort him to his carriage, using the whip without the slightest compunction on all the full dressed Mandarins who came in his way, kicking and pushing others from him with the greatest rudeness. These acts of violence the courtiers of Yuen-ming-yuen received as a discipline to which they were accustomed, and expressed neither surprise nor indignation. Such then is the court of China, an empire which, during the convulsions which have involved those of the western world, has proceeded, approximating to a state of perfection which it is feared the destinies of imperfect man never can attain. In comparison with most European nations, it is now greatly barbarous, though from all it is distinct in customs, manners, and immemorial usage. Since the period of the last Tartar conquest, it has probably declined in the cultivation of all those arts which serve to civilize mankind.

Very shortly after his arrival at the hotel prepared for him, Lord Amherst was visited by the imperial physician, who, after having felt his pulse, returned and reported to the em-

peror that he did not think there was any thing the matter with the English ambassador. After having been exposed for some time to the insolent gaze of, to use Lord Amherst's own expression, "by far the worst bred of all the well-dressed crowds he had ever seen," he received the emperor's verbal commands immediately to return to his own country. No time given for rest or repose, the members of the embassy were condemned to all the miseries and inconveniences of another night journey to Tong-chew.

Thus ended the hopes and expectations of success from the British embassy to China, an experiment which it is trusted will never be repeated, except under very different circumstances. We learn, however, a striking lesson for our guidance and instruction during the whole course of its proceedings—of the intolerable presumption and wretched imbecility of the Chinese government. Subsequently to the events above stated, the emperor appears upon reflection to have been extremely apprehensive of the consequences of the insolent treatment and abrupt dismissal of the ambassador. He published what may be considered a penitentiary proclamation, taking much blame for suffering himself to be deceived by his traitorous mandarins, who had conducted the embassy,

one and all of whom were degraded and deprived of their rank. The English ambassador was at the same time declared to have been ignorant of the customs of the celestial empire, and there is no doubt that a very powerful apprehension continued for many months to exist, that the treatment of the embassy would have been resented, which it ought to have been, by the government of Great Britain. This existing feeling in China contributed more than any other cause to the quiet and unmolested manner in which we were permitted to carry on our commerce at Canton for some following years.

While these events were passing at Peking, some others took place at Canton, which as powerfully demonstrated the character of the Chinese government. When information reached the viceroy of the abrupt dismissal of the embassy, his conduct exhibited the most marked hostility. Natives connected with our trade were seized and tortured, and when the company's ship, General Hewitt, which had been with the embassy to the northward, arrived, all communication with the shore was prohibited, and the ship itself surrounded by Chinese war vessels. Some little time afterwards, Captain Maxwell arrived in the *Alceste* frigate, which had brought Lord Amherst to China.

The same inimical disposition was again evinced, to which Captain Maxwell most properly expressed his determination not to submit. After his frigate had been fired on, and he himself otherwise insulted, he resolved at once to move up the river. On passing the forts, which command the entrance, he was again fired at, which he returned with several broadsides, after the first of which the forts were instantly abandoned by the garrison. The sequel speaks volumes for the character of the Chinese government. I was present next day with the select committee when the Hong merchants arrived in a body from the city. They stated that they had been sent by the viceroy to offer his congratulation on Captain Maxwell's conduct, who, they added, though fired upon by the forts, had not fired a single gun in return, and that in consequence of this great forbearance the English frigate might come up the river to the second bar. The *Alceste* had been anchored there some twenty-four hours previously. This adds one to numerous existing instances of the wretched imbecility of the Chinese government, cloaked as it ever is under the most arrogant exterior. It proves what I state with deep regret, but what I most conscientiously believe to be true, that you may gain any thing from its fears and appre-

hensions, but will never receive any concessions from its good will or friendly disposition. It is a melancholy truth, but the whole history of our intercourse confirms it.

It is much to be desired that in any future arrangements with respect to China, you will not attempt to force indiscriminately into application those principles which regulate our commercial transactions with other countries. China may, in many respects, be said to stand alone among the nations; not only differing, but in many instances diametrically opposed, in the nature of its laws, customs, and institutions. A Chinese, when he goes into mourning, puts on white; the left hand they consider the place of honour; they think it an act of unbecoming familiarity to uncover the head; their mariner's compass they assert points to the south; the stomach they declare to be the seat of the understanding; and the chief god of their idolatry is the devil. Nor in their modes of reasoning, political or philosophical, are they less at variance with us than in their every-day customs and opinions. They reject with disdain all international treaties with foreigners, and communicate to us none of the advantages of their own laws. As far as regards homicides, for instance, the native law of China makes as clear and accurate distinction between man-

slaughter and murder, as does our own statute book. But the principle which they lay down as applicable to foreigners is this: "Rule barbarians as barbarians, without law; if you govern them by laws it will lead to rebellion." How long it is to be our fate to submit to such a state of things, I know not. It would have been greatly for our credit and interest, had it terminated long ago. The sooner it now does, the better. But if no attempt be made by you to ameliorate our present condition, it will very soon be forced upon you. Collisions with the natives, and violent differences with the government, have always hitherto existed, and to them, from our more extended intercourse, we shall now be greatly more liable.

With respect to the very delicate question respecting homicides, I have always thought that the Chinese had fully as much reason to complain of our injustice, as we had of theirs. No power or authority was given to the select committee to institute judicial inquiry; and until a man, accused of crime, was proved to be guilty, it was impossible for them to deliver him up to death. Still more so was it where the native was killed by unavoidable accident, or by the hand of an Englishman in self-defence. The Americans thought differently in 1821, and most basely delivered up one of their

seamen to be strangled, who was perfectly innocent of all crime. One case did occur, happily half a century ago, when the gunner of an English ship was, by the miserable imbecility of the supercargoes, surrendered and put to death. But their conduct, in doing so, was not condemned by the Court of Directors, or the government of England!

It has always appeared to me that this difficulty respecting homicides might, in great measure, be overcome by giving your representatives at Canton extraordinary powers to constitute a jury, and try British subjects accused of murder. If guilty, we can surely have no wish to protect them. If innocent, we must, doubtless, have every determination to do so. I am well aware that this is an apparent anomaly of the establishment, as it were of an *imperium in imperio*; but our situation in China is altogether an anomaly, and we must make the best of it. I rejoice to find that some such arrangement is in contemplation by you; be assured it will be attended with the most advantageous results. Much cavilling will be raised against it, but let those who condemn in the first instance, suggest a more appropriate remedy. It was a system formerly practised by the Dutch in China; it is now adopted by the Portuguese at Macao, who, though ac-

knowledging themselves mere tenants at will of the Chinese government, claim the privilege of trying criminals before their own judicial tribunals, and according to their own laws.

The period I regard as now arrived, when a better understanding must be established between the British and Chinese governments. State embassies, we have seen, can accomplish nothing; but I think it must be admitted that we have a right to require from China, at least just and equitable treatment and protection to the persons and property of British subjects. Let commissioners be sent, accompanied by a part of the naval squadron in India; for, to command the slightest attention or respect in China, you must appear with an appropriate force; let your requisitions be such as you are justified in making, and be prepared to insist upon them if refused. This may be readily done by occupying, should you be compelled to it, one of the numerous islands in the Canton river, and, if necessary, seizing the forts which command its entrance. They have no force, either military or naval, to oppose to you, that is not contemptible. Under such circumstances I feel satisfied your demands would be granted in a very brief period. Where justice has been resolutely required of the Chinese government by foreigners, it has always

been conceded ; where its tyranny has been submitted to, it has only led to multiplied oppression and degradation. Either with the view of obtaining such present understanding with the government of China, or of being prepared for it in the event of collisions taking place, it will be most desirable that the arrangement of such differences should be committed to the Governor-General of India, as the period of time required for reference to Europe has hitherto invariably frustrated our endeavours to remedy the existing evils.

On occasion of the last very violent aggressions of the Canton authorities on the British Factory, when I received a communication from the Governor-General, stating, that if necessary, we should be supported by the disposable forces of India against acts of aggressive violence, and which I took care should be made known to the Chinese government, its tone and conduct towards us immediately underwent a very great change. Had my own views been followed up, and further redress of the injuries and insults offered been demanded, I feel satisfied it would have been attended with the most beneficial consequences. We had despatched the whole of our fleet from Canton for England at an unprecedented early period, and had ten months before us, during

which negotiations of any kind would have been conducted without any injury to our commerce. But the Court of Directors did not deem any ulterior measures necessary. To the decided conduct of Lord William Bentinck at this trying crisis, may be attributed the preservation of our trade to China. The day of settlement with the Chinese government has only been delayed ; it must very shortly arrive.

The changes which have been now made in appointing kings instead of Company's representatives to Canton will, as far as the Chinese government are concerned, be regarded by them with assumed indifference. But you must not expect that your superintendents, under present circumstances, will be received with any more regard or attention than those previously appointed by the East India Company. A proclamation will be issued by the viceroy of Canton, saying, that " these barbarian foreigners, ever prone to change, have altered their system ; that the Company is dead, and that king's consuls are hereafter to be the responsible persons in China ; that the celestial empire regards such changes with indifference, but that the newly appointed foreign devils must tremblingly obey its immutable laws." These are the terms and conditions on which your king's representatives now go to China. If they wish

to be made acquainted with the difficulties they have to encounter, they have only to refer to every volume of the Company's records for the last two hundred years. They will live in houses, the very walls of which will be covered with proclamations derogatory to the foreign character, and accusing them of vices which we do not even venture to name in civilized society. This state of things cannot long continue. Even if the government at home be disposed to submit to it, its subjects in China will not. In proof of this, let me refer you to all the late petitions and documents drawn up by the British merchants of Canton, where, to use the expressive words of Lord Grenville, "they are banished to a remote corner of the empire, there to reside in a state of perpetual quarantine."

When we reflect upon the course and character which foreign intercourse with China has assumed since its first establishment, we cannot wonder at the extreme jealousy which its government has felt, nor at the exclusive policy which it has adopted, nor withhold our commendation of the ability with which it has prevented European ambition from obtaining a footing in the empire. England, perhaps even more than Russia, is the great object of its national apprehension. The imperial ministers

at Pekin are well aware of the magnitude of our Indian possessions. In our war with Nepal, we were treading on the very confines of China. During the Burmese campaign, on our advance to Ummerapoor, we were knocking at the very gates of the Chinese empire.* This sensation of apprehension of our ambitious projects it is, above all things, desirable to allay, with a view to the improvement of our intercourse; though it is most erroneous to suppose that a submissive course of conduct on our part will accomplish this end. The Chinese government is incapable of appreciating a policy founded on principles of moderation and justice; and, adopting their own mode of reasoning, they ascribe to fear upon your part what has its origin in a very different motive. You must, in short, satisfy the Chinese government that you possess a giant's strength; that you are aware of its excellence, but have no inclination to exercise it in a tyrannous disposition.

The principal exhibition which we have hitherto made of our military and naval power in China, was, as you must be aware, the expedition under Admiral Drury, in 1808, to take possession of the island of Macao, at the time we were receiving the other Portuguese settle-

* On both these occasions, the Emperor of China was appealed to for his assistance against us.

ments in Asia under British protection. I merely allude to that most ill-conducted expedition, for the purpose of stating that its only effect was to increase the presumption of the Chinese government, by inducing them to believe that we stood in awe of their superior power. It was singular to observe an English admiral treated with the greatest insult and contempt, on account of the forbearance of his conduct, when nearly at the same period a native Chinese pirate, who with a numerous fleet had ravaged the coasts of the empire, and perpetrated the greatest cruelties, was received with the most ceremonious respect and consideration by the viceroy of Canton. He was subsequently bribed to desist from his lawless course of life, and to accept of a high official situation.

We must be at all times prepared to expect that the Chinese government will act upon very different principles from those which we meet with in our intercourse with other nations. There is no country to which the well-known maxim of Tacitus, of "*omne ignotum pro mag-nifico est*," has been so applicable as to China. Situated on the eastern confines of the world—approachable only by straits of difficult and dangerous navigation—protected on its land frontier by nearly impassable deserts, by the

lofty and continuous mountains of Tartary, and by that extraordinary wall, which will long remain a monument of how much may be accomplished by a united people associated for a great national object—further guarded from foreign innovation and encroachment by the great wall of Chinese jealousy and restriction,—its moral and political maxims and institutions have been long regarded with that respect which ignorance is ever ready to pay to mystery, and which even the superior intelligence of an enlightened mind will offer at the secret shrine which defies the power of its penetration. But a better knowledge of the language and character of this peculiar people has enabled us to withdraw the mysterious veil which so long shaded the face of truth. We see much to excite our surprise, but little to call forth our approbation, or a wish to imitate. The vast empire is held together by the superincumbent pressure of tyrannic power, acting on the minds of a naturally timid and peaceful people. There is little or no security to person or to property; and it is lamentable to have witnessed how much the channels of justice are impeded by every description of corruption.

It is a common and vulgar error to believe that the Chinese, like many other Asiatics, are bigoted in matters of religion. They are

grossly superstitious, but are careless in general of religious observances ; while the government has almost always acted on a principle of most liberal toleration. The Buddhism of India, the worship of the grand Lama of Thibet, the Jewish and Mahommedan religions, as well as the Christian, have at different periods been introduced and established in China. If Christianity is now proscribed, it is solely on account of the apprehension that it is associated with political intrigue. Remove this apprehension, and you will have as wide a field opened to the efforts of the Protestant Christian, as is about to be opened to the enterprise of our merchants.

The mighty changes now determined on—for they deserve the name, when you are about to apply them not only to our intercourse with the Chinese empire, but to Japan and the many other interesting nations of eastern Asia—must to a certain extent be the work of time, and their progress gradual. Many circumstances have, however, been assisting in their promotion. Above all things, our increased knowledge of their languages, and the further instruction of our countrymen in these, will, I trust, receive from you every encouragement—with a view to a more extended trade it is imperatively essential. An admirable institu-

tion was some years ago founded at Malacca by Dr. Morrison, called the Anglo-Chinese College, which, from an unworthy jealousy, I fear, of Missionary establishments, has never received that encouragement to which it was entitled. About forty Chinese students are annually educated there in all the general branches of useful knowledge. Religion is not compulsory, but voluntary. The sons of a common peasant at Malacca thus receive an education superior to those of the Emperor of China. It is, I trust, unnecessary to point out how great the advantage of Chinese so educated, annually returning and mixing with the general society of the empire. The greatest benefit also will result from the efforts of a free press at Malacca, from which have already issued many excellent works in the language of China. Let me entreat that your attention be given to these subjects, too long neglected in eastern Asia, but calculated to accomplish greater ends than either our fleets or armies.

In respect to the subordinate ultra-gangetic countries of Siam, Cochin-China, and Cambodia, they afford considerable prospect of commercial expectation, though on account of the wretched constitution of their governments, the advantages of intercourse with them are not likely to be readily obtained. We have at-

one of the unhappy circumstances connected with events in those remote countries, that as they do not vividly appeal to the passions and immediate interests of the public mind in England, they often fail in exciting that attention to which they are eminently entitled. A revolution in Paris will always be very differently regarded from a revolution at Peking. In the one instance every human passion is involved in the agitating vortex, in the other the event is looked at in the remote perspective by the calm and tranquil eye of contemplative philosophy. It is much to be wished that we shall not continue longer so insensibly indifferent as we have hitherto been to our great interests and mighty empire in Asia.

In the present appointment of British representatives to Canton, it will be of the first necessity that their powers be of a very extended kind. China cannot fail to become a place of resort for adventurers, bankrupts in fortune and character; and both Americas are open as a ready outlet from Canton for successful villany. Were it only for the purpose of protecting our merchants of credit and character against the annoyances to which they may be exposed from such a description of persons, it is essential that your representatives should have a very effectual controul. The

Chinese laws take no cognizance of the acts of foreigners towards each other. An Englishman might put another to death in Canton with impunity, and without being subject to any native tribunal.

In conclusion, I would again entreat you, above all things, to endeavour to obtain a definite understanding with the Chinese government. Until this be obtained, our commerce with China will be subject to restrictions, interruptions, and impositions of the most vexatious and injurious kind. The people of that vast empire are most desirous of a more extended intercourse with us, and they possess nearly all those characteristics calculated to render that intercourse reciprocally beneficial.

Do not send our national flag annually to China to be openly insulted by any contemptible minion of its weak and arrogant government. Assume an attitude that you do not blush to own. Such a course of policy must eventually, though perhaps it can only gradually, lead to a greatly increased demand for the productions of English industry. But you will accomplish a nobler and far more important end; and an amicable intercourse once established with the highly interesting but still uncivilized and unenlightened nations of Eastern Asia, must become the means of commu-

nicating to many millions of the human race at present involved in comparative ignorance and barbarism, the light of knowledge, and the blessings of religion.

I have the honour to remain,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

CHARLES MARJORIBANKS.

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